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CAIRO POL FOR MAXSTADT

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TAGS: [MASS](#) [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [NI](#)

SUBJECT: NIGERIA: BATAGARAWA ON MPRI; C-130 SPARE PARTS
FUNDING AND ELECTION PREPARATIONS

REF: 02 ABUJA 3156

CLASSIFIED BY AMBASSADOR HOWARD F. JETER FOR REASONS 1.5
(B) AND (D).

1. (C) SUMMARY: During a February 20 meeting with Ambassador Jeter, Minister of State for Defense (Army) Lawal Batagarawa promised to discuss funding problems for MPRI and the shipment of U.S. donated C-130 spare parts with Minister of Finance Adamu Ciroma. Turning to the upcoming elections, Batagarawa said the military would be ready to help the Nigerian National Police (NNP) in maintaining order, but it would not take action unless the NNP requested assistance. Batagarawa also said that if necessary, the military would provide logistical assistance to the Independent National Elections Commission (INEC). Finally, Ambassador expressed his concern that possible U.S. military action in Iraq could lead to potentially violent anti-American demonstrations. END SUMMARY.

2. (C) During a February 20 meeting with Ambassador Jeter, Minister of State for Defense (Army) Lawal Batagarawa promised to look into problems of obtaining GON funding for MPRI (REFTEL) and the shipment of U.S. donated C-130 spare parts. Batagarawa said he would raise both issues with Minister of Finance Adamu Ciroma on Friday, February 21 and promised to update the Embassy on Monday, February 24. (COMMENT: As of Tuesday, February 25, Post has not been contacted by Batagarawa's office and ODC Abuja attempts to elicit the information from the MOD's Office of Joint Services have been unsuccessful. Ambassador plans to initiate a call to Batagarawa within the next few days. END COMMENT.)

3. (C) While Batagarawa said he was "embarrassed" by the GON's inability to honor its commitments to these programs, he expressed sympathy for Ciroma. He noted that the Minister of Finance is under tremendous pressure to release funds at a time when cash flows into government coffers are "extraordinarily poor". Nevertheless, Batagarawa said he would work to resolve the issue before the end of March.

4. (C) Ambassador asked Batagarawa what the military was doing to prepare for the April elections. The Minister said internal security was the responsibility of the NNP, however, the military would be prepared to lend assistance if the police requested it. Batagarawa also said the military was prepared to assist INEC in transporting election materials throughout the country, if required.

5. (C) Finally, Ambassador expressed his concern that possible U.S. military action against Iraq could lead to potentially violent anti-American demonstrations in Abuja and elsewhere in Nigeria. When asked how intense he thought such protests might be, Batagarawa declined to "speculate" and said he wanted more time to think about the issue before making a statement. (COMMENT: We plan to follow-up with Batagarawa and other senior GON officials on this issue. END COMMENT.)

COMMENT

6. (C) Ambassador discussed MPRI funding with President Obasanjo in November (REFTEL) and, like the problems surrounding the shipment of the C-130 spare parts, he has raised the issue with Batagarawa on multiple occasions. Despite promises from all levels of the GON to resolve these issues, little progress has been made thus far. While there is some hope the GON will eventually make good on its financial commitments to MPRI and take advantage of

the donated C-130 parts (The Ambassador raised the C-130 spare parts issue on February 24 with President Obasanjo's Permanent Secretary, who might be able to produce results.), it is unlikely the GON will do anything until after the distraction of the upcoming elections has receded into the past.

17. (C) It is unlikely the NNP will be able to contain any serious outbreaks of violence without the support of the military. Batagarawa's comments reflect both the hope within the military that it will not be needed to maintain order and the recognition that if electoral and communal violence escalate during the run-up to elections the military is the only dependable guarantor of peace in Nigeria. END COMMENT.
JETER